

7

Why We Remain Jews:
Can Jewish Faith and History
Still Speak to Us?

Joseph Cropsey, Chairman: It is a strange title, and has the simultaneous characteristics of being apparently somewhat narrow and at the same time apparently bold. It seems to be narrow in being apparently addressed to Jews: "why we remain Jews." Why it is a bold-sounding title, I suppose hardly needs to be spelled out, since it suggests that a question remains as to why people should continue to be Jews. This is something which as Jews, perhaps you would never expect to raise as a question. Now, as it happens, the boldness of this fundamental question is connected with the breadth of it. It is not a narrow question, as it will turn out, because the problem seems to arise in virtue of some very deep and far-ranging developments coming from modern science and modern politics. Some developments in modern political life seem to cause a special difficulty for people when they consider their Jewish character; and indeed, this is what makes the question somewhat more than narrow when they consider the question of their religious affiliation at all. And I think that since the question does so much have to do with developments coming from modern science and modern political life, the question is one that probably occurs not only to Jews but to people of every religious persuasion. I am absolutely uncommissioned to speak for any of the subsequent lecturers, and I do not in any way wish to appear to anticipate what they might say; but it would surprise me very much if it did not turn out to be true that in one way or another the lectures will speak to the question that arises in the mind of everybody, not only of a Jew, and can easily be transformed, with some modifications, into the question why anybody should remain anything that he happens to be to begin with. One other consideration might deserve to be mentioned. Not only is the title of this series of lectures a bit bold in its appearance; you might also have been somewhat taken aback by

the extensive affiliation of the political science department with the discussion of this question. As to whether that contributes another element of boldness, I will have to allow you to judge on hearing what is forthcoming.

This is one of those occasions on which it literally is true that the speaker needs no introduction. Everybody, I think, knows the reputation of the gentleman whom we will now have the pleasure to hear. I will only say that it is a source of very great personal pleasure, and it would be an honor to anybody, to be in a position of introducing the Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science, Dr. Leo Strauss.

Leo Strauss: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I have to make two prefatory remarks. One was partly anticipated by Dr. Cropsey regarding the title. When Rabbi Pekarsky first approached me and suggested this title, I was repelled by it, not to say shocked by it. But then, on reflection, I found one could say something about it. At any rate, I must say that to the extent to which I prepared this paper, I prepared it on the assumption that I was going to speak on the subject: "Why do we remain Jews?" I learned of the subtitle only a few days ago when, thanks to some mishap in the printing division of the Hillel Foundation, I saw it for the first time. I could not with propriety speak on the theme of the subtitle because, after all, everyone is a specialist, and my specialty is (to use a very broad and nonspecialist name) social science rather than divinity. Now, social science demands from us, as we all know—and the gentlemen from the social science division I see here, some of whom take a very different view than I, would agree with me on this—or at least the characteristic of the social sciences is, to start from solid if low facts and to remain as much as possible on that ground. No flights of fancy, no science fiction, no metaphysics will enter. That is clear.

The second point which I have to make in my introduction is of a more private nature, which I am sad to have to make: I could not prepare this lecture, for entirely private reasons, as I would have wished to prepare it. But nevertheless I did not cancel the lecture because I thought I am prepared, if not indeed for this lecture, then for this subject. I believe I can say, without any exaggeration, that since a very, very early time the main theme of my reflections has been what is called the "Jewish question." May I only mention this single fact perhaps, going very far back in my childhood. I believe I was about five or six years old in some very small German town, in a village, when I saw in my father's house refugees from Russia, after some pogroms which had happened there, women, children, old men, on their way to Australia.

At that time it could not happen in Germany. We Jews there lived in profound peace with our non-Jewish neighbors. There was a government, perhaps not in every respect admirable, but keeping an admirable order everywhere; and such things as pogroms would have been absolutely impossible. Nevertheless this story which I heard on that occasion about pogroms in Russia made a very deep impression on me, which I have not forgotten until the present day.¹ It was an unforgettable moment. I sensed for a moment that it could happen here. That was overlaid soon by other pleasing experiences, but still it went to my bones, if I may say so. Now this and many other experiences, which it would be absolutely boring and improper to rehearse, are the bases of my lecture. You will not expect, then, a lucid presentation. On the other hand, I will promise to give, as I indicated by the reference to the fact that I am a social scientist, what one would call a hard-boiled presentation. I prefer to call it a frank one. I will not beat around the bush in any respect. At the same time I hope that I can reconcile what not necessarily all social scientists do: the avoiding of beating around the bush with a treatment which we would call *be-kavod*, or to translate it, "honorable." I think such would be possible. Now I turn to my subject.

The main title taken by itself implies that we could cease to be Jews, and that there might be very good reasons for not remaining Jews. It even suggests this possibility. The clearest expression of this view, of this premise, was given by Heinrich Heine, the well-known poet: "Judaism is not a religion but a misfortune."² The conclusions from this premise are obvious. Let us get rid of Judaism as fast as we can and as painlessly as we can. If I may now use an almost technical word, complete "assimilation" is the only help. Now, this solution to the problem was always possible, and it was always somehow suggested, because at all times it was very difficult to be a Jew. Think of the Middle Ages, think of the Reformation, to say nothing of other times. In a way, that solution was even easier in the past than it is now. It was sufficient in the Christian countries for a Jew to convert to Christianity and then he would cease to be a Jew; and we cannot count, and no statistician will ever be able to find out, how many Jews took this easy way out of what Heine calls "misfortune." Yet it was not quite easy even then. I will not speak of the obvious things like the separation from one's relatives and friends. There was a big experiment made with this solution in Spain, after 1492, when the Jews were expelled from Spain. What I say about these things, of course, is entirely based on authorities I have read.

Spain was the first country in which Jews felt at home, although they knew they were in exile. Therefore the expulsion from Spain was an infinitely greater misfortune for the Spanish Jews than the expul-

sion from France in 1340 (if I remember well), or the expulsion from England in 1290 or so. Quite a few Jews simply could not tear themselves away from Spain. This difficulty was enhanced if the individuals in question were wealthy, had large possessions, especially landed possessions; some of them, some leaders of Jewish communities, converted to Christianity. And they stayed in Spain. But this time it was different, especially after the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, because there were so many converts at the same time, not one here and another there.³ As a consequence, there was a reaction to these many new Christians. And the reaction showed itself in distrust of them. Many Christians thought that these converts were not sincere believers in Christianity, but simply had preferred their earthly fortunes to their faith. So the Inquisition entered, and all kinds of things were done which are most horrible to read; and of course, in some cases, even if the Inquisition did its worst, it could not give a legal proof of the fact that some former Jew had engaged in Jewish practices or whatever it may be, and so quite a few survived. But one thing was done which was extralegal but not illegal: the Spaniards made a distinction between the "old" Christians and the "new" Christians; and they began to speak of Spaniards of pure blood, i.e., the old Spaniards, and by implication of Spaniards of impure blood, meaning the *conversos*. The Jews who had converted to Christianity were forced to remain Jews, in a manner.

This is ancient history. Assimilation now does not mean conversion to Christianity, as we know, because assimilation now is assimilation to a secular society, a society which is not legally a Christian society, a society beyond the difference between Judaism and Christianity, and—if every religion is always a particular religion (Judaism, Christianity)—an areligious society, a liberal society. In such a society there are no longer any legal disabilities put on Jews as Jews. But a liberal society stands or falls by the distinction between the political (or the state) and society, or by the distinction between the public and the private. In the liberal society there is necessarily a private sphere with which the state's legislation must not interfere. It is an essential element of this liberal society, with its essential distinction between the public and private, that religion as a particular religion, not as a general religion, is private. Every citizen is free to adhere to any religion he sees fit. Now given this—the necessary existence of such a private sphere—the liberal society necessarily makes possible, permits, and even fosters what is called by many people "discrimination." And here, in this well-known fact, the "Jewish problem" (if I may call it that) reappears. There are restricted areas, and in various ways, . . . I do not have to belabor this point; any glance at journals of sociology or at Jewish

journals would convince you of the fact if you have any doubt about its existence.

Therefore, the practical problem for the individual Jew, on the low and solid ground, is this: How can I escape “discrimination”? (This is a term which I beg you to understand as always used by me with quotation marks. I would not use it of my own free will.) The answer is simple: By ceasing to be recognizable as a Jew. There are certain rules of that which everyone can guess, I would say, *a priori*; and I would not be surprised if there were an Ann Landers and other writers of this type, who had written perhaps a long list of these techniques. The most well-known of such techniques are mixed marriages, changes of name, and childless marriages. It would be a worthy subject for a sociological study to enlarge on this theme and to exhaust it, if possible. I do not have to go into it because it is not truly important, for this solution is possible at most only for individuals here or there, not for large groups. I once heard the story of some Jews in Los Angeles who tried to solve the “discrimination” problem by becoming Christian Scientists; there were first four, and then ten, and then more. Then, at a certain moment, the chairman (I don’t know whether they call him “chairman”) said: “Well, that is really nice, but why don’t you make another group, a group of your own, of Christian Scientists”—meaning of former Jews. I would say that this possibility, i.e., of escaping “discrimination” by ceasing to be recognizable as Jews, is refuted by a very simple statistical phenomenon, not known to me statistically but only by observation: the Jewish birthrate.⁴

A broad solution would require the legal prohibition against “discrimination” in every manner, shape, or form. And I have seen people, Jews, who wanted just that. Fraternities must not be permitted to pick their own people, and strictly speaking, no man can pick his own company. The prohibition against every “discrimination” would mean the abolition of the private sphere, the denial of the difference between the state and society, in a word, the destruction of liberal society; and therefore, it is not a sensible objective or policy. But some people would say: “Why not the destruction of liberal society if this is the only way in which we can get the abolition of ‘discrimination’ (or what they call, the ‘abolition of injustice’)?” Now, we have empirical data about this fact, the abolition of a liberal society and how it effects the fate of Jews. The experiment has been made on a large scale in a famous country, a very large country, unfortunately a very powerful country, called Russia. We all are familiar with the fact that the policy of communism is the policy of the communist government, and not of private, fraternitylike or other, organizations, and this policy is anti-Jewish. That is

undoubtedly the fact. I have checked it by some information I received from certain quarters. I asked a gentleman whom I know very well, a friend of mine, who is very much in favor of a deal with Russia. He is a Jew. I asked him: "What did you observe about Jews in Soviet Russia?" And he said, "Of course, it is true: Jews are 'discriminated' against, as a matter of principle, by the government." And he gave me a striking example. Some of you will say, all right, that is the policy of the present Russian government; it is not essential to communism. In other words, it is possible to abolish liberal society, to abolish the difference between state and society, without having to become anti-Jewish. I would like to discuss this objection, that it is not essential to communism to be anti-Jewish. I would say it is very uncommunistic to seek for the essence of communism outside of what they call the "historic reality of communism," in a mere ideal or aspiration.⁵ Trotsky's communism, which was different and which was surely not anti-Jewish in this sense, has been refuted by his highest authority: History. A Trotskyite is a living, a manifest contradiction. There is no longer a Western revolutionary proletariat, to put it on a somewhat broader basis, and that settles this issue perfectly. Only thanks to Stalin could the communist revolution survive. Stalin was a wiser statesman from this point of view than Trotsky—and to some extent, than Lenin—by demanding socialism within a single country. Only thanks to Stalin could the communist revolution survive Hitler.

But in order to survive Hitler, Stalin had to learn from Hitler. That is always so: in order to defeat an enemy you have to take a leaf from his book. Stalin learned two grave lessons from Hitler. The first, which has nothing to do directly with our issue but should be mentioned, is that bloody purges of fellow revolutionaries are not only possible, but eminently helpful. The old communist theory, as you surely know, was: no repetition of the bad experiences of the French Revolution, where the revolution ate its own children. And then Hitler showed by his classic act against Röhm that this can be done,⁶ and that it makes governing much easier. Hence, the big Stalin purges.

Second (and here I come back to our immediate subject), in pre-World War I socialism, where the distinction between Bolshevism and Menshevism was not so visible, at least not in the western European countries, it was an axiom: "Anti-Semitism is the socialism of the fools"; and therefore, it is incompatible with intelligent socialism.⁷ But again, one can state the lesson which Hitler gave Stalin in very simple words, as follows. The fact that anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools is an argument not against, but for, anti-Semitism; given the fact that there is such an abundance of fools, why should one not steal that

very profitable thunder. Of course, one must not become a prisoner of this like that great fool Hitler, who believed in his racial theories; that is absurd. But judicially used, politically used, anti-Jewish policies make governing Russians, and Ukrainians, and so on, much easier than if one would be strictly fair to Jews. I do not have to point out the obvious fact that we must think not only of the Russians and the Ukrainians, but also of the Arabs; and everyone can easily see that there are many more Arabs in the world than there are Jews. I mean, a sober statesman for whom "the end sanctifies every means" has no choice. Khrushchev (I think one can say)⁸ abandoned lesson number one regarding the desirability and usefulness of bloody purges of party members—let me add, for the time being—but he surely kept lesson number two, and it has come to stay.

I draw a conclusion. It is impossible not to remain a Jew. It is impossible to run away from one's origins. It is impossible to get rid of one's past by wishing it away. There is nothing better than the uneasy solution offered by liberal society, which means legal equality plus private "discrimination." We must simply recognize the fact, which we all know, that the Jewish minority is not universally popular, and we must recognize the consequences which follow from that. We all know that there is in this country an entirely extralegal, but not illegal, what we can call "racial hierarchy" coming down from the Anglo-Saxons, down to the Negroes; and we are just above the Negroes. We must face that. And we must see that there is a similarity between the Jewish question and the Negro question; there are quite a few Jewish organizations which are very well aware of this. But also, in order to keep the record straight, we must not forget the difference. When we Jews fight for something which we may fairly call justice, we appeal to principles ultimately which (if I may say so) were originally our own. When the Negroes fight for justice, they have to appeal to principles which were not their own, their ancestors' in Africa, but which they learned from their oppressors. This is not an altogether negligible difference, which should be stated by someone who does not want to beat around the bush.

I begin again. There is no solution to the Jewish problem. The expectation of such a solution is due to the premise that every problem can be solved. There was a famous writer, a great mathematician in the sixteenth century (as I read somewhere), Vieta, who literally said that there is no problem which cannot be solved.⁹ This is, in application to social matters, a premise of many well-meaning men in the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I disagree with them entirely. It is not self-evident that every problem can be solved, and therefore we

should not be altogether surprised if the Jewish problem cannot be solved.

Let us briefly survey the solutions which have been suggested. The first is the assimilation of individuals, of which I disposed before. The second would be assimilation in a different form: Judaism would be understood as a sect like any other sect; I say advisedly, understood as a "sect," and not as a "religion." A sect is a society that is based on an entirely voluntary membership, so that today you belong to sect A, and if you change your mind you leave sect A and enter sect B; and the same applies, of course, to all members of your family. The fact that the man stems from Jewish parents would be entirely irrelevant from this point of view. I do not believe that this opinion can be reconciled with anything ever understood as Jewish, regardless of whether it is orthodox, conservative, or reform.

There is a third solution—the only one, as opposed to the hitherto mentioned solutions, which deserves our serious attention—and that is assimilation as a nation. Here the fact that the Jews are an ethnic group is honestly faced. But it is also implied that Judaism is a misfortune, and hence that we must do something about the problem. But the problem cannot be solved except on a national scale. We Jews are a nation like any other nation; and just as any other nation, we have the right to demand self-determination. It leads necessarily to the demand for a Jewish state. This was the view taken by the strictly political Zionists. I emphasize the word "strictly," because in fact there are all kinds of combinations which are by no means due to accident but to one of the deepest principles of human nature, which is, that man is the animal who wishes to have the cake and to eat it. To make clear what I mean, I remind you of the motto of the most impressive statement of political Zionism: Pinsker's *Autoemancipation*,¹⁰ written in the eighties of the last century. Pinsker's motto is this: "If I am not for myself, who will I be for? And if not now, when?" That is: do not expect help from others; and do not postpone your decision. This is a quotation from a well-known Jewish book, *The Sayings of the Fathers*; but in the original, something else is said which Pinsker omitted: "But if I am only for myself, what am I?"¹¹ The omission of these words constitutes the definition of pureblooded political Zionism. There was, long before Pinsker, a man who sketched the principles of political Zionism—a great man, but not a good Jew—and that man was Spinoza. Towards the end of the third chapter of his *Theologico-Political Treatise*, he said (I am speaking from memory): "If the principles of their religion did not effeminate the Jews, I would regard it as perfectly possible that one day, if the political constellation is favorable, they might succeed in restoring their

state."¹² I do not believe he said "in Palestine" because, from his point of view, Uganda would have been as good as Palestine. I did not explain what he meant by the effeminating character of the Jewish religion. He meant by that: trust in God instead of trust in one's own power and "hardware." But in spite of the undeniable fact that political Zionism, pure and simple, is based on a radical break with the principles of the Jewish tradition, I cannot leave the subject without paying homage to it. Political Zionism was more passionately and more soberly concerned with the human dignity of the Jews than any other movement. What it had in mind ultimately was that the Jews should return to their land with their heads up, but not by virtue of a divine act but rather of political and military action—fighting.

Yet it is impossible to settle all Jews in that very small land. Political Zionism was a very honorable suggestion, but one must add that it was also merely formal or poor. I would like to illustrate this. I was myself (as you might have guessed) a political Zionist in my youth, and was a member of a Zionist student organization. In this capacity, I occasionally met Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionists.¹³ He asked me, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, we read the Bible, we study Jewish history, Zionist theory, and, of course, we keep abreast of developments, and so on." He replied, "And rifle practice?" And I had to say, "No."

In this student group, when I talked to my friends—some of whom are now very high officials in Israel—I made this observation. They were truly passionate Zionists, and worked very much, and were filled with enthusiasm. But, after all, you cannot always make speeches, and have political discussions, or do other administrative work: you also have to have, so to say, a life of your own. I was struck by the fact that the substance of the intellectual life of some of these estimable young men—to the extent that it was not merely academic, and therefore of no particular interest outside of academic halls—consisted of their concern with people like Balzac.

But the main point is that this Zionism was strictly limited to political action. The mind was in no way employed, or even the heart was in no way employed, in matters Jewish. Now this led very early to a reaction and opposition to political Zionism by cultural Zionism. Cultural Zionism means simply that it is not enough to have a Jewish state; the state must also have a "Jewish culture." In other words, it must have a life of its own. Jewish culture means, the product of the Jewish mind in contradistinction to other national minds. If we look, however, at what this means in specific terms, we see that the rock bottom of any Jewish culture is the Bible, the Talmud, and the Midrash. And if you take these

things with a minimum of respect or seriousness, you must say that they were not meant to be products of the Jewish mind. They were meant to be ultimately “from Heaven,” and this is the crux of the matter: Judaism cannot be understood as a culture. There are folk dances, and pottery, and all that—but you cannot live on that. The substance is not culture, but divine revelation. Therefore, the only consistent solution, the only clear solution, is that which abandons, or which goes beyond, cultural Zionism and becomes clearly religious Zionism. And this means: return to the Jewish faith, return to the faith of our ancestors.¹⁴

But here we are up against a difficulty which underlies the very title of the lecture and everything I said before. What shall those Jews do who cannot believe as our ancestors believed? So while religious Zionism is the only clear solution, it is not feasible, humanly speaking, for all Jews. I repeat: it is impossible to get rid of one's past. It is necessary to accept one's past. That means that out of this undeniable necessity one must make a virtue. The virtue in question is fidelity, loyalty, piety in the old Latin sense of the word *pietas*. The necessity of taking this step appears from the disgraceful character of the only alternative, of denying one's origin, past, or heritage. A solution of a man's problem which can be achieved only through a disgraceful act is a disgraceful solution. But let us be detached; let us be objective or scientific. Is this universally true? We must bust the case wide open in order to understand the difficulty. I am not interested in preaching up any solution; I try to help myself and, if I can, some of you in understanding our difficulty. Let us take a man by nature very gifted for all excellences of man, of the mind and of the soul, who stems from the gutter. Is he not entitled to run away from the gutter? Surely one could even say that by being silent about his gutter origins he acts more decently than by displaying them, and thus annoying others with a bad smell. Yet, however this may be, this interesting case—which deserves all our compassion, I think—is surely not our case. Our worst enemies admit this in one way or another. Our worst enemies are called (since I do not know how many years) “anti-Semites,” a word which I shall never use, and which I regard as almost obscene. I think that if we are sensible we abolish it from our usage. I said in a former speech here that it was coined by some German or French pedant: I smelled them. But then I learned, a few weeks ago, that it was coined by a German pedant, a fellow called Marr.¹⁵ The reason he coined it was very simple. “Anti-Semitism” means hatred of Jews. Why not call it as we Jews call it? It is *rish'us*, “viciousness.”¹⁶ “Hatred of Jews” is perfectly intelligible. “Anti-Semitism” was coined in a situation in which people could no longer

justify their hatred of Jews by the fact that Jews are not Christians. They had to find another reason; and since the nineteenth century was almost as proud of science as the twentieth century, the reason had to be scientific. Science proves that the Western world consists of two races, the Aryan race and the Semitic race; and therefore, by speaking of anti-Semitism, our enemies could claim that they acted on a spiritual principle, not from mere hatred. The difficulty is that the Arabs are also Semites. One of my Arab friends was occasionally asked in the Chicago suburbs, "You are, of course, an anti-Semite." And he would say, "I cannot be that."

So I speak of our enemies, and I want to show that they recognize that we are not from the gutter. Let us take the latest and crudest and simplest example: the Nazis. The Nazis' system was based on the notion of the Aryan. I mean, it was no longer a Christian Germany, it was to be an Aryan Germany. But what does "Aryan" mean? The Nazis were compelled, for example, to give the Japanese the status of Aryans, and quite a few others. In a word, "Aryan" had no meaning but "non-Jewish." The Nazi regime was the only regime of which I know which was based on no principle other than the negation of Jews. It could not define its highest objective except by putting the Jews into the center; that is a great compliment to us, if not intended as such. I take more serious cases; first, the anti-Judaism of late classical antiquity, when we (and incidentally also the Christians) were accused by the pagan Romans of standing convicted of hatred of the human race. I contend that it was a very high compliment. And I will try to prove it.

This accusation reflects an undeniable fact. For the human race consists of many nations or tribes or, in Hebrew, *goyim*. A nation is a nation by virtue of what it looks up to. In antiquity, a nation was a nation by virtue of its looking up to its gods. They did not have ideologies at that time; they did not have even ideas at that time. At the top, there were the gods. And now, our ancestors asserted *a priori*—that is to say, without looking at any of these gods—that these gods were nothings and abominations, that the highest things of any nation were nothings and abominations. (I cannot develop this now; then we would have to go into broader considerations—into that metaphysical, science-fiction thing which I have tried to avoid—but I must make one remark.)¹⁷ In the light of the purity which Isaiah understood when he said of himself, "I am a man of unclean lips in the midst of a nation of unclean lips,"¹⁸ the very Parthenon is impure. This is still alive in Judaism today; perhaps not among all Jews, but among some. I heard the story that, when Ben-Gurion went to Thailand for negotiations or something, he went to a Buddhist temple, and there was quite an uproar

in Israel about that on the old, old grounds.¹⁹ And I suggested to the man who told me, that he should wire to Ben-Gurion, and that Ben-Gurion should say that what he was meditating upon in that Buddhist temple was the foreign policy of Israel, which might be pleaded as an extenuating circumstance.

Now, the fight of our ancestors against Rome was unique. We have the two greatest cases: the Jewish fight against Rome, and the German fight against Rome. The Germans were more successful than us from the military point of view: they defeated the Romans; we were defeated. Yet still, victory as opposed to defeat is not the highest criterion. And if we compare these two actions, we see that the fight of our ancestors was not merely a fight against foreign oppression, but it was a fight in the name of what one should very provisionally call an “idea”—the only fight in the name of an idea made against the Roman empire.

The next great anti-Jewish body was the Christian republic. The hatred of Jews persisted, but changed; in some respects, it was even intensified. For the Jewish people’s posture toward the God-man was the same as that against the manlike gods of the Greeks and Romans. And since there are many Christians today who are no longer trinitarians, one difference surely remains between Judaism and Christianity which was never, never taken back. The Christian assertion that the redeemer has come was always countered by our ancestors with the assertion that the redeemer has not come. One can perhaps say—and I say this without any animus—that *the* justification of Judaism in its fight with Christianity was supplied by the Crusades. One only has to read that history as a Jew to be satisfied with the fact that one is a Jew. The Crusades consisted partly of a simple orgy of murder of Jews. Wherever the Crusaders went (above all, in Jerusalem itself), how did our ancestors act? Permit me to read a few lines from the writings of the greatest living Jewish historian, Yitzhak F. Baer’s *Galut*:

The best descriptions left us of the persecutions that took place at the time of the First Crusade are to be found in Hebrew records. These were constructed from shorter reports describing the happenings in individual places and provinces, and encountered similar pamphlets with opposite tendencies that were circulated by the Christians. In this age, religious-national martyrdom reaches its highest expression. These martyrs are no seekers after death like the early Christians, no heroes challenging destiny. Violence and death come unsought. And the whole community suffers—old and young, women and children, willing or not. At first they fight for the preservation of the community, and they hold off their enemies before the walls of the episcopal palace or the fortress just as long as defense is possible. [Strauss: One must add here

the remark, which Baer of course does not deny, that the higher clergy behaved on the whole much better than the lower clergy. You know the peasants' sons who became priests were much more fanatical and savage than. . . . Recall among the higher clergy the famous case of Bernard of Clairvaux, who tried to prevent that. But they did not prevail.²⁰ But then, when all hope for safety is gone, they are ready for martyrdom. No scene is more stirring than the Sabbath meal of the pious Jews in Xanten (1096). Hardly had the grace before the meal been recited when the news came of the enemy's approach; immediately they fulfilled the ceremony of the closing grace, recited the formula expressing faith in the oneness of God, and carried out the terrible act of sacrifice that was renewed again and again, generation after generation, from the time of Masada [in the Roman rule—L.S.]. The martyrologies have described in frightful clarity the ritual of voluntary mutual slaughter (not the sacrifice of enemies, falsely ascribed to the Jews), and have glorified it in poetry modeled after the sacrifice of Isaac (*Akeidat Yitzhak*).²¹

The Reformation abolished bloody persecution. But the unbloody persecution which remained was in some respects worse than the bloody persecution of the Middle Ages, because it did not call forth the fighting qualities which were still so powerfully visible in that glorious time for us of the Crusades. I summarize. Our past, our heritage, our origin is then not misfortune, as Heine said, and still less, baseness. But suffering indeed, heroic suffering, suffering stemming from the heroic act of self-dedication of a whole nation to something which it regarded as infinitely higher than itself—in fact, which it regarded as the infinitely highest. No Jew can do anything better for himself today than to live in remembering this past.

But someone might say: "Is this sufficient if the old faith has gone? Must the Jew who cannot believe what his ancestors believed not admit to himself that his ancestors dedicated themselves to a delusion—if to the noblest of all delusions? Must he not dedicate himself to a life in a world which is no longer Jewish, and by the same token no longer Christian, but, as one could say, post-Judaeo-Christian? However repulsive the thought of assimilation must be to any proud man, must he not accept assimilation as a moral necessity, and not as a convenience? Is not the noblest in man his capacity to assimilate himself to the truth?" Very well, let us then reconsider assimilation.

We will be helped in that reconsideration by this statement of a non-Jew, of a German. Of a German, in addition, who has a very bad reputation in many quarters, and that man is Friedrich Nietzsche. I would like to read to you an aphorism, which will not please every one of you, from Nietzsche's *Dawn of Day*, aphorism 205:²²

Of the people of Israel. To the spectacles to which the next century invites us belongs the decision of the destiny of the European Jews. That they have cast their die, crossed their Rubicon, is now quite obvious: it only remains for them either to become the lords of Europe or to lose Europe, as once in olden times they lost Egypt, where they confronted a similar either/or. In Europe, however, they have gone through a schooling of eighteen centuries such as no other people here can show, and in such a way that the experiences of this terrible time of training have benefited not merely the community but even more the individual. As a consequence of this, the psychic and spiritual resources of today's Jews are extraordinary; they, least of all those who inhabit Europe, reach, when in distress, for the cup or for suicide in order to escape a deep dilemma—as the less gifted are so prone to do. [*Strauss:* Every sociologist knows that, regarding suicide, the situation is terribly changeable. That was still the old sturdy Jews of Europe he means.] Every Jew has in the history of his fathers and ancestors a treasure of examples of coldest self-possession and steadfastness in dreadful situations, of bravery under the cloak of wretched submission, their heroism in *spernere se sperni* (despising that one is despised) surpasses the virtues of all the saints. One has wanted to make them contemptible by treating them contemptibly for two millennia, and by barring them access to all honors, to everything honorable, and by all the more deeply pushing them down into the more sordid trades—and indeed, under this procedure they have not become cleaner. But contemptible? They themselves have never ceased to believe themselves called to the highest things,²³ nor have the virtues of all sufferers ever ceased to adorn them. The way in which they honor their fathers and children, the reason in their marriages and marriage customs, distinguish them among all Europeans. In addition they have understood how to create a feeling of power and eternal vengeance out of the very trades that were left to them (or to which one left them); one must say in the excuse even of their usury that without this occasionally pleasant and useful torture of those who hold them in contempt, they could hardly have endured holding fast to their self-respect for so long. For our self-respect is tied to our ability to retaliate in good and evil. In all this their vengeance does not easily carry them too far, for they have all that liberality, also of the soul, to which frequent changes of place, climate, customs of neighbors and oppressors, educates man; they possess by far the greatest experience in all human intercourse, and²⁴ even in their passions they practice the caution taught by this experience. They are so sure in the exercise of their spiritual versatility and shrewdness that they never, not even in the most bitter circumstances, find it necessary to earn their bread by physical force as manual laborers, porters, or farmhands. [*Strauss:* Well, he knew only Germany.] Their manners still show that one has never put noble chivalric feelings into their soul and beautiful weapons about their body: some-

thing obtrusive alternates with an often tender and almost always painful submissiveness. But now that they unavoidably intermarry more and more, from year to year, with the noblest blood of Europe, they will soon have a good heritage of the manners of soul and body so that in a hundred years already they will appear noble enough so that as lords they will not awaken the *shame* of those subdued by them. And that is what matters! Therefore a settlement of their case is still premature! They themselves best know that there can be no thought of a conquest of Europe or of any violence whatsoever; but also that at some time Europe may fall like a perfectly ripe fruit into their hand, which only casually reaches out. In the meantime it is necessary for them to distinguish themselves in all the areas of European distinction and to stand among the first, until they will be far enough along to determine themselves that which distinguishes. Then they will be called the inventors and guides of the Europeans and no longer offend their shame. And²⁵ how shall it issue forth, this wealth of accumulated great impressions which Jewish history constitutes for every Jewish family, this wealth of passions, virtues, resolutions, renunciations, struggles, victories of every kind, how shall it issue forth if not at last in great spiritual men and works! Then, when the Jews will be able to exhibit as their work such precious stones and golden vessels as the European peoples of shorter and less profound experience neither can nor could bring forth, when Israel shall have changed its eternal vengeance into an eternal blessing of Europe, then that seventh day will once again be here when the old Jewish God will be able to *rejoice* in Himself, His creation, and His chosen people—and we all, all will rejoice with Him!

This is the most profound and most radical statement on assimilation which I have read. It does not lose any of its significance by the fact that Nietzsche has not written without irony. In other words, he had no hopes in this respect; he only thought something through. Assimilation cannot mean abandoning the inheritance, but only giving it another direction, transforming it. And assimilation cannot be an end, it could only be a way toward that. Assimilation is an intermediate stage in which it means distinguishing oneself in pursuits which are not as such Jewish but, as Nietzsche would say, European, or as we would say, Western. After having received a notion of what assimilation in the highest sense could mean (and only in this way can we understand any assimilation), we must look at the actual assimilation. After one has heard such a passage, one trembles to look at the actual assimilation. There exists a kind of Jewish glorification of every clever or brilliant Jewish mediocrity, which is as pitiable as it is laughable. It reminds one of villagers who have produced their first physicist, and hail him for

this reason as the greatest physicist that ever was. I refuse to quote chapter and verse, but when I read statements in Jewish periodicals about Jewish celebrities I am always reminded of that. I became so distrustful of it at one time, that I did not believe that Einstein was of any significance. I am not a theoretical physicist and, therefore, I was as entitled to my opinion as any other ignoramus. Then I asked a trustworthy friend of mine about it, who was a physicist and a Jew. I told him my opinion: I had the feeling that this is really a propaganda machine organized by Einstein's wife. (I believe that was, by the way, true; I heard that we have had one.) But then he told me, "You are mistaken." He was present at a seminar in Berlin in which Einstein participated, and that was tops in physics, Max Planck and other such men were present. And it was simply so: Einstein had the defect that he did not know elementary mathematics—I mean, that was his genuine defect—but his conceits, his inventions, were surpassing that of all the others there. And so my physicist friend said to me, "You must believe it. Einstein is really a first-rate physicist, and surely the greatest physicist of this epoch. It is an empirical fact." So I accepted that. But I must say, I am still proud of my resistance, because this inclination to self-glorification, in things in which there is no reason for self-glorification, is a disgrace. That we have today so many outstanding Jews is due (let us not deceive ourselves about that) to the general decline, to a general victory of mediocrity. It is today very easy to be a great man. "Among the blind, the one-eyed is king," goes the proverb.

Nietzsche's analysis has some defects, although his statement (which is almost dithyrambic) is based on a very deep analysis—perhaps on the deepest analysis ever made—of what assimilation could possibly mean.²⁶ Now, the most patent defect of Nietzsche's analysis seems to be this: the regeneration or cleansing which he had in mind as part of the process proved to be insufficient as a work of individuals, however numerous, dedicated, or gifted. It required and requires an act of national cleansing or purification; and this, in my mind, was the establishment of the state of Israel. Everyone who has seen Israel, nay, everyone who has witnessed the response to that act in New York, will understand what I mean. But this fact refutes Nietzsche's dream. For what the establishment of the state of Israel means, while it may be an act or a progress, in a way, of Jewish assimilation—as it surely is—is also a reassertion of the difference between Jews and non-Jews. Since I said "an act of assimilation," may I tell another story from my youth? I had a friend who was not a Zionist, and his father was an old-fashioned liberal Jew. They called themselves in Germany "German citizens of Jewish faith." And what he said was: when he goes to fetch his father

from the synagogue and sees him together with his other assimilationist friends, and then he sees this young generation of Zionist boys, then he must admit that this older generation, which is so un-Jewish by refusing any national character of Judaism, is much more Jewish than this young generation is, which was accepting of the national character of the Jews. It is undeniable.²⁷

Judaism is not a misfortune (I am back to my beginning) but, let us say, a “heroic delusion.” In what does this delusion consist? The one thing needful is righteousness or charity; in Judaism these are the same. This notion of the one thing needful is not defensible if the world is not the creation of the just and loving God, the holy God. The root of injustice and uncharitableness, which abounds, is not in God, but in the free acts of His creatures—in sin. The Jewish people and their fate are the living witness for the absence of redemption. This, one could say, is the meaning of the chosen people; the Jews are chosen to prove the absence of redemption. The greatest expression of this, surpassing everything that any present-day man could write, is that great Jewish prayer, which will be known to some of you and which is a stumbling block to many, *Aleinu leshabeiah*. It would be absolutely improper for me to read it now.

[The following is a translation of the *Aleinu* prayer, which Leo Strauss did not actually read during the lecture. A similar, but not identical, translation was added to the transcription by the original transcribers. —Ed.]

It is our duty to praise the Lord of all things, to ascribe greatness to Him who formed the world in the beginning, since He has not made us like the nations of other lands, and He has not placed us like other families of the earth, since He has not assigned to us a portion as to them, nor a lot as to all their multitude. (For they worship vain things and emptiness, and pray to a god which cannot save.²⁸) But we bend the knee and bow in worship and acknowledge thanks before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth, the seat of Whose honor is in the heavens above, and the abode of Whose might is in the loftiest heights. He is our God; there is none else. In truth He is our King; there is none besides Him. As it is written in His Torah: “And you shall know this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord He is God in the heavens above and on the earth below: there is none else.”²⁹

We therefore put our hope in You, O Lord our God, that we may speedily behold the splendor of Your might, when You will remove the idols from the earth, and the false gods will be utterly cut off, when the world will be perfected under the kingdom of the Almighty, and all human beings will call on Your name, and when all the wicked of the earth will be turned toward You. Let all who dwell in the world rec-

ognize and know that to You every knee must bend, and every tongue must swear allegiance. Before You, O Lord our God, let them bend the knee and prostrate themselves, and to Your glorious name let them render honor. Let them all accept the yoke of Your kingdom, so that You may reign over them speedily, and for ever and ever. For the kingdom is Yours, and You will reign in glory for all eternity. As it is written in Your Torah: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."³⁰ And it is said: "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: on that day the Lord shall be One, and His name One."³¹

Now let us reflect for a few moments more—be patient—about delusion. What is a delusion? We also say a "dream." No nobler dream was ever dreamt. It is surely nobler to be a victim of the most noble dream than to profit from a sordid reality and to wallow in it. Dream is akin to aspiration. And aspiration is a kind of divination of an enigmatic vision. And an enigmatic vision in the emphatic sense is the perception of the ultimate mystery, of the truth of the ultimate mystery. The truth of the ultimate mystery—the truth that there is an ultimate mystery, that being is radically mysterious—cannot be denied even by the unbelieving Jew of our age. That unbelieving Jew of our age, if he has any education, is ordinarily a positivist, a believer in Science, if not a positivist without any education. As scientist he must be concerned with the Jewish problem among innumerable other problems. He reduces the Jewish problem to something unrecognizable: religious minorities, ethnic minorities. In other words, you can put together the characteristics of the Jewish problem by finding one element of it there, another element of it here, and so on. I am speaking from experience. I once had a discussion with some social scientists in the presence of Rabbi Pekarsky, where I saw how this was done. The unity, of course, was completely missed. The social scientist cannot see the phenomenon, which he tries to diagnose or analyze, as it is. His notion, his analysis, is based on a superficial and thoughtless psychology or sociology. This sociology or psychology is superficial and thoughtless because it does not reflect on itself, on science itself. At the most it raises the question: "What is science?" Nevertheless—whatever may follow from that—I must, by God, come to a conclusion.

Science, as the positivist understands it, is susceptible of infinite progress. That you learn in every elementary school today, I believe. Every result of science is provisional and subject to future revision, and this will never change. In other words, fifty thousand years from now there will still be results entirely different from those now, but still subject to revision. Science is susceptible of infinite progress. But how can science be susceptible of infinite progress if its object does not have an

inner infinity? In other words, the object of science is everything that is—being. The belief admitted by all believers in science today—that science is by its nature essentially progressive, and eternally progressive—implies, without saying it, that being is mysterious. And here is the point where the two lines I have tried to trace do not meet exactly, but where they come within hailing distance. And, I believe, to expect more in a general way, of people in general, would be unreasonable.

[End of Lecture]

Joseph Cropsey, Chairman: For various reasons I will not go beyond a short remark. Dr. Strauss is known to have spoken other times on the theme of “Jerusalem and Athens.” My only observation tonight is, I believe he has done it again. It seems to me that what Dr. Strauss has said—with respect to the solution of the Jewish problem or the character of the Jewish problem, in a way in which a respectable man can hope to understand the solution of it—is a sort of affirmation of the human unity of the excellences known to the old tradition of the Jews, and also those timeless things that the Greeks, maybe in their own way, first articulated with respect to the moral and intellectual virtues.

Question and Answer Period

Questioner: The title of the lecture, “Why Do We Remain Jews?”—am I correct that your answer is that we have no choice?

Strauss: As honorable men, surely not.

Questioner: Well, even one step back from that, even if we wish to be dishonorable, do we have a choice?

Strauss: Yes. But I tried to show that even then it would not work, because you have to have a very, very special . . . like a murderer, you know, who thinks that the easiest thing is to get the money he wants by murder, and then he lives his whole life with that murder. I mean, that is not a practical thing. And this fellow, who tries to do that, will live for the rest of his life with his solution. In other words, his solution will prove to be a problem. I made this reservation only for this reason: one cannot look into human beings, and of human beings one only knows a limited number. There may be somewhere, perhaps in Alaska, a man of Jewish origin who no one knows as a Jew and who lives happily ever after. That I cannot exclude. But you get my point.

Questioner: I tend to be not quite as pessimistic temperamentally as you, and perhaps younger and more foolish, but it seems to me that one of the things that could contribute to a better outlook for the problem of “discrimination” is just the best of sciences. If we as Jews can better come to understand the Christians and non-Jews sociologically, culturally, as well as just in terms of theological doctrine, and they can come to understand us better sociologically, culturally, and historically—and so also with the Negroes—we can yet remain Jews, non-Jews, and Negroes, and yet win some mutual respect.

Strauss: Well, sure! I would say I deplore the word “pessimism,” because that means the belief that this world is the worst of all possible worlds; and that, I think, very few people believe. It is impossible to maintain. But you think I am more apprehensive than you are?

Questioner: Can we not hope, at least? Let us not hope for winning an end to “discrimination.” I mean, everyone has his friends, everyone has his likes and his dislikes, and we do not wish to take that away from anyone, although we can certainly hope for increasing the mutual respect of peoples of different religions and different races.

Strauss: Sure! Sure! I mean, everyone should try to educate himself and, if he can, educate others to behave as decent human beings. But whether the so-called prejudices, meaning the erroneous opinions, are so important—in some cases, they may be important—but whether they are universally so important, can be doubted. You see, knowledge of another group—a nation or whatever it might be—is not necessarily conducive to good relations. The cultural exchange between Germany and France shortly before World War I surpassed everything which the most sanguine man could expect now to take place from cultural exchange with Soviet Russia. And there was no security officer at the elbow of every German in Paris or of every Frenchman in Berlin. And yet, when the thing came to the test, all these cultural relations (which were much more intimate than the cultural relations between the United States’ scientists and Soviet scientists) meant absolutely nothing for the fate of their political relations.³² In other words, in political matters the stronger and lower is more powerful than the higher and weaker; that is well known. But, by all means, go on! There is no question that if there are misconceptions, that if a person thinks (to pick a somewhat neutral example) that every Negro is given to violence, of course it is good to tell him that it is a misconception, to tell him: “You are absolutely mistaken; that is a false generalization.” Surely! I am all in favor of that. But I do not

believe that . . . By the way, I would not regard my view as apprehensive in particular, but it is only if you expect the possibility of perfect harmony among human beings in general; then, indeed, it would be disappointing. But what right do we have to expect that, short of divine intervention? In other words, if that day would come where there would not be a trace of “discrimination” against Jews, and there would be perfect amity between all non-Jews and all Jews in this country, I will bet there will be another line of “discrimination” drawn. Man needs that, I believe.

Questioner: In the discussion as to why we remain Jews, I do not know that I heard a definition of what a Jew is. I bring this up because I am going back to the historical treatment, to whatever similarities there may be between Jews of today and our Jewish ancestors. And I wonder, reflecting on this, if with this change we cannot think of something that we are progressing toward? Perhaps something which we cannot define today, but still a progression? And, also, looking at people in the world in general, if all people are not progressing toward some goal?

Strauss: I believe I understand your position; it has a long and very respectable ancestry also. But I would say this. That there is a change from our ancestors to us is the massive fact which is underlying my whole paper. Otherwise we would sit here and perhaps listen to a homiletic interpretation of some biblical verse, and not discuss that; or, discuss some subtlety of the religious law, and not do what we do. Surely things have changed. And you ask, “Could there not be further progress?” This means that the change from our ancestors to us was unqualifiedly a progress. A very grave assertion. If you take as the standard the absence of pogroms or other bloody things of this kind, a standard of living and many conveniences, legal security, and other greater things even, it is undeniable. Also science. I mean, there is no question that today science is much more advanced as science than it was centuries ago. But is this sufficient? Can we simply speak of progress?

Questioner: [continuing the previous question] I think there has also been a progress theologically speaking.

Strauss: What is that?

Questioner: A change. It might be individualistic, but it is a progress.

Strauss: Yes, but you see, when you say, “Let the individual decide,” you say it is absolutely arbitrary preferences; and then we can no

longer speak of progress. So why do you not stick to your guns? That would then mean that the theology written in our century—Jewish theology—is in fact superior (if you assert progress) to, say, the theology of Yehuda Halevi, Maimonides, or someone else. I mean, prior to investigation that is surely possible; but let me only draw your attention to one thing, one point. The enormous progresses which have been achieved in every respect—in the standard of living, and even politically—have very much to do with modern technology, which itself is based on modern science. This same science and technology has also made possible for the first time, or is about to make possible, the destruction of the human race. The most wicked and vicious human beings who ever were—Nero himself—could not, even if they wished, think of such devices as the atomic bomb. In other words, his killing capacity did not reach the state of what some people call “overkill.” That is exactly the other side. I mean, when we speak of progress, positive progress, we must also say that this progress is essentially, not accidentally, accompanied by a progress in destructiveness. If we look at Jewish history, and if we look at that history as Jews, then we must say that such a thing—we have gone through terrible things—but such a thing as the Nazis has never happened before, I mean, before the twentieth century. If you look at the terrible persecution of the Middle Ages, you have to admit that this was not the *government* which demanded it. The government, represented by the higher clergy, was opposed to it. I mean, one can prove this by a simple picture. In some medieval churches, especially in the Münster in Strassburg, there is a presentation of the Church and the Synagogue. The Church: eyes open; the Synagogue: blindfolded. “Blindness,” as the Christians call it. But there is nothing whatever mean and degrading in that, nothing whatever. It is a dogmatic assertion to which the Christians from their point of view are entitled, but it has nothing in itself, it has nothing whatever, to do with a debasement, degradation, and so on, as a *government* policy as it was pursued in Nazi Germany. Even the czarist regime, although it was surely abominable, did not reach that degree of abomination which the Nazis reached. And that is in the twentieth century. So I believe that is why there are many people who have become doubtful whether it is wise to speak of “progress.” Progress in certain respects; regress in other, perhaps more important, respects. And therefore, that we are different, that there was a change from our ancestors to us, is undeniable. And it is also prudent to assume that there will be further changes from us to Jews a hundred years from now. But that this should be a progress is an unwarranted assumption. There could be possibly, if everything goes well, a reduction in what is now called

"discrimination." That, I believe, is for the time being very possible. And in this respect, I think this lady, if I may use this elegant term, my blessings. But not more.

Questioner: I am afraid I did not make my question very clear. I think you pointed out some things which are not exactly to our taste: not only the Nazis and the Russians, but also the possibility (but not the definite direction) of nuclear destruction. The point of my question was not the discussion of progress or not progress, but rather that there has been an undeniable change, from Judaism as it was defined many centuries ago to what it is today. And it seems to me that this change is continuing, and therefore will continue in the future, and I think it is reasonable.

Strauss: Aha! That is the key point. I mean, change is undeniable. But for better or for worse, that is the question.

Questioner: Well, I bring the question back to the basic discussion: why do we remain Jews? In view of this continuing change going on, we have to define "what is a Jew," and "what are we remaining," "what have we changed from," and "what are we changing to." And is there not a possibility that the various beliefs might eventually come a little closer to something that is not what we call today "Jewish"?

Strauss: Well, that was exactly the dream of the eighteenth century. Lessing put it this way, in a letter to Moses Mendelssohn, if I remember well. Lessing was absolutely sick and tired of religious controversy, you know. He was not an orthodox Lutheran, and he got into all kinds of troubles. And he said: "I wish I could go to a country where there were neither Jews nor Christians."³³ That was his simple epistolary formulation of what a very broad political movement intended. There are people who say that this notion underlies the American Constitution. You know that that is controversial, because it raises the question: what does the First Amendment mean? But it is surely, at first glance, a possible view: a secular society. But this is no longer an aspiration. Now we have some experiences with a secular society. And if we are sensible, we must consider that experience. We have also the experience in an alternative secular society, namely, the communist society. I mean, a religious man who is sure on the basis of divine revelation that this will be the future, namely, that the messianic age will come, then he is consistent if he believes in the face of all evidence to the contrary. But someone who bases his hopes not on divine revelation must show some human

grounds for it. And I think you cannot show any. Because, you see, even granting what some people suspect—that a hundred years from now there will no longer be religious people in practical terms, that the members of religious communities, churches, synagogues, and so on, will become a tiny minority—even that would, of course, not mean that the distinction between Jews and Christians, between Jews and non-Jews rather, would disappear. Because a Jewish community is of this peculiar character, that it is indeed what we now call a “religious community”—“religion” not being a Jewish word—but at the same time, it is the people, the seed of Abraham; that goes together. How this goes together in the thought of the Jewish tradition, that is a very deep and very old question—but the fact is undeniable. You see, all practical questions must be settled here and now. The way in which your great-grandchildren might settle it cannot determine the way in which you settle it now, because you cannot possibly know under what circumstances your great-grandchildren will live. If social science claims to predict, it does not mean that it can predict the circumstances in which Jews will live a hundred years from now. The predictions of social scientists are much more circumscribed and, if I may say so, irrelevant. I mean that from a practical point of view. They are theoretically very interesting.

Questioner: I have both uneasiness to express, and a question to ask you. The uneasiness that I want to express first, has to do with the fact that in the contemporary world—and I am directing my comment to the rather easy way in which you talked about the Christians on the one hand, and then the non-Jews on the other—in the contemporary world the outstanding anti-Jews, or Jew haters, have not been Christians, but have been Nazis (on the one hand), who have not been Christians, and communists (on the other), who have also not been Christians. (*Strauss:* That is correct.) The question that I ask is: what implications do you see, if any, in the growth in the kind of friendliness—at least theologically, and in other areas, too—which prevails, say, between people like Tillich on the one hand, and Martin Buber on the other?³⁴ Where, if you will, the leading theologians, both Jewish and Christian, have referred to each other, with a considerable amount of friendliness, and read and quote each other. Do you see any Judaizing in the contemporary world of Christianity, or Christianizing of Judaism?

Strauss: No. Surely not. I mean, I do not know whether the examples you chose were the ones I would have chosen—I mean, the individuals you mentioned—but that is truly irrelevant. You are right. There are

such figures; Parkes in England is a good example.³⁵ There are quite a few Christians now who deplore the decision originally made by Augustine in favor of forcible persecution. I know that. And I would assume that there were at all times deep Christians who in their heart of hearts saw the same thing: that this is incompatible with Christianity. Glad as I am about these developments, I must not give up a certain (how shall I say?) sobriety to which I am obliged by virtue of the fact that I belong to a political science department. In other words, I must also speak of the seamy side of the matter. By this I do not wish for one moment to impugn the motives of any individual concerned with these matters. For example, I know Professor Finkelstein of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he is on (as you know) excellent terms with Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary,³⁶ and I know other such examples. No question. But you cannot be blind to the fact that, for a hundred years, gradually building up and now coming to the fore in our century, there is a very powerful movement which is both anti-Christian and anti-Jewish. And this, of course, leads . . . and here it is not entirely legitimate to adduce examples from straight politics. You know, when a new party arises, and it is very powerful, then the older parties, who were in a dogfight up to this point, might be compelled to make peace among themselves. That this reconciliation could be, in the case of Judaism and Christianity, in the spirit of the noblest aspirations of the noblest Jews and Christians is shown by the fact, you know, that we Jews find all kinds of statements to this effect in Halevi, Maimonides, and so on. I do not wish to question the theological legitimacy of this reconciliation,³⁷ but I would like to say that we must also look at the other side, and here I come to my point. This was exactly what I tried to show. I could show it sensibly only in the case of communism: that this new power or powers, which are both anti-Jewish and anti-Christian, still make the distinction between Jews and Christians. The Greek church and Islam are treated by the Soviet government very differently from the way in which (to use a Christian expression) the Synagogue is treated. You see the point? Only someone completely ignorant would say that anti-Jewish things are a matter of Christianity. Of course not. The Romans and Greeks in Alexandria and other places were as much anti-Jewish as the most wicked monks in Germany or in Italy or wherever it was. In other words, this fact, that quite a few Christians were friendly toward Jews, is significant—and I mentioned Nietzsche advisedly, from this point of view, although Nietzsche was surely not a Christian, as you all know; but Nietzsche surely was very German, and he is held partly responsible for the Nazis.³⁸ And there is a certain animosity against Germany among

Jews—which I shared, I believe, as much as anyone could have shared it—but which is also in need of rethinking, I believe. And we find other cases: for example, Max Weber, a man very well known in the social sciences; the philosopher Schelling, much less known; and there were some other famous cases—*precisely* in Germany—who were not only friendly to Jews, but showed a very profound understanding of what one would call the “substance” of Judaism, which a man who is friendly to Jews does not as such possess, as you all know. Surely that exists. But we must not forget the background of this reconciliation. A new power has arisen, Marxist communism, which promised—by a break, by a radical break, with the whole past—to destroy the very possibility of anti-Jewish feelings and thoughts. Marx’s well-known anti-Jewish utterances were, of course, not inspired by anti-Jewish feelings in the common sense of the word. Yet Marx’s present-day successors, like Khrushchev, have restored anti-Jewish policies on a communist basis. However this may be, communism in principle threatens Judaism and Christianity equally. As a consequence, the Jewish-Christian antagonism—just as the intra-Christian antagonisms—tend to disappear. I would say, in proportion as Jewish-Christian antagonism disappears, other antagonisms come to sight; and these antagonisms cannot be presumed to be indifferent to the difference between Jews and non-Jews, and are likely to exploit this difference for their purposes. But it is most important to realize, as I tried to show by the comparison of the Greek Orthodox church with the Synagogue, that the actual policies of that common enemy are much more anti-Jewish than anti-Christian. I know the facts you mention. My reference to the terrible times in the Middle Ages was due only in order to dispel Heine’s crude and simplistic view: misfortune. That was not mere misfortune; that was something much greater than misfortune.

Questioner: Do you agree that there is a basic difference between “discrimination” against Jews and “discrimination” against Negroes, in that those who “discriminate” against Negroes are glad to have some people that they can look down on or around, whereas those who are against Jews would rather have no Jews at all, and therefore have their property belong to Christians or belong to some other sect of which they happen to be members?

Strauss: I never have considered it. I do not know. I mean, in the first place I would say that the desire to have someone to look down on is not limited to anti-Jewish people. I have known Jews who have had the same desire. I mean, every man who has “ambition,” in the vulgar

sense of the word, has this desire. So let us not be self-righteous at this point. But, you know, every chaser after badges does not have to be vicious, but the element of viciousness is in that. But as for this point which you have made, I am not so familiar with the details of anti-Jewish and anti-Negro propaganda. The facts as you stated them—if they are facts—would simply prove that there is more Jewish property to distribute easily than the Negroes have.

Questioner: As a non-Jew I find that one of my greatest problems is, as you mentioned at the very end of your lecture, the fact of being and the infinity which underlies and holds up the idea of progress. And I find myself standing before this idea of being, and looking at a Jew as if the difference between him and me was irrelevant. The one thing that seems to distinguish us in our attitudes (and I suppose you could call me a “humanist”) is that before the fact of being I acknowledge that all our symbols are relevant, and that we all stand under the same dispensation. But the Jew will not admit that. He will never merely say, “You are a man as I.” And I find this a real difficulty. (*Strauss:* Oh, that is not true; I mean, that is simply not true.) No, I find that he insists, you see, on saying that he is a Jew. And this question of self-definition creates real difficulties in communication. (*Strauss:* Oh God! That is, I think, really unfair. That is as if you would blame a Christian for saying that he is a Christian. Would you say that a Christian as Christian denies to non-Christians the qualities of men? Or a Muslim or Buddhist? Or if a man says, “I am an American,” does he deny that the people who are not Americans are not human beings?) No. But the Christians make certain assertions about dogma. I find that there are certain people, such as you dealt with to some extent in raising the problem of the Jew who cannot believe as his fathers believed. Now, I am inclined to think also that the question of race as a Nazi problem is merely a residual one. That is: there may continue, out of choice, to be people who choose to stay in the tradition and race, and who may continue, for so long as there is a human race, a seed which is what we would call a “distinctive race.”

Strauss: Well, race not in any particular biological sense. That is, I suppose, sheer nonsense. But people who—to put it very cynically—people who *believe* themselves to be descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Yes, sure. That could be. But I would say, I do not see where there is anything wrong with that.

Questioner: Yes. But the whole point is that given this fact that race as such . . . I mean, one has only to go to New York and watch, for instance,

the Maccabee soccer team, which has come from Israel to play soccer on the fields of Yonkers, to realize that the whole business of race is irrelevant. All these peoples call themselves Jews, and the idea of physical race. . . .

Strauss: "Race" as it is used in any human context is not a subject about which biologists can say anything. This is clear.

Questioner: Right. Granted. So this then is my point. We have the Jew who cannot identify himself with any dogmatic fixation of his fathers. And yet withal he insists on calling himself a Jew. Now, he may be a Jew, but his Jewishness consists in a myth. Which can be a reality, I grant you, in the human consciousness, but I cannot lay my hands on it.

Strauss: Well, that is very, very nice of you to say that it might exist, although you cannot lay your hands on it . . . But I would say I have tried to explain that. I took the extreme case of a Jew who feels—I did not take your particular "humanist," but I could also have taken him—who thinks that this was all, well, perhaps a noble belief, but it is not a true belief, and so he cannot share it. And then he sees no reason whatever for perpetuation of this old community. All right. But what is he going to do? How does it look in practice? You see, in all practical matters it is not sufficient to state merely the ends; you must also show the *way* to the end. And the simplest thing you can show is the first step. Now, suppose you tell this man, "All right, you don't wear a beard." (Today beards have changed their meanings, I have been told; there was a time when the beard was a sign by which you could recognize a Jew.) So, in other words, all other things which he can possibly change in his external appearance he will change. He may even change his name. He may even marry a non-Jewish woman; and the children will not be brought up as either Jews or Christians; they will not be circumcised or baptized. I mean, let us go into this; if we want to commit the act of treason, we must go into that. Good, now how do we go from here? I would say you will discover—except in extremely rare cases—somewhere flies in the ointment. For example, this very liberal Jew and this very liberal non-Jewess are not descended from rocks or oaks (to quote an old poet), but from human beings. By which I mean, they belong to families. And the families do not necessarily see eye to eye with their most liberal members. The Jew may be willing to say, "All right, I will never see my father, mother, brother, and sister again." But the non-Jewish wife, owing to an amiable weakness of the female sex, may perhaps say, "Well, it is too hard, I will see my mother." And then

they (the family) will always say, "Why did you do it? Why did you marry that Jew?" Then the children must also see the grandmother, and the same difficulty arises again. I mean, you cannot wish away these things. Then you would have to form colonies, in which only people who have broken with their Jewish heritage or past origins, and with their Christian past origins, would live together. People have made such small communities for other purposes; for example, for trying out socialism and communism. But they are mentioned in the histories of social movements as amiable, but wholly ineffective. It does not work. If you take it on the lowest ground of practice—I mean, just Machiavellian recipes for getting rid of their misfortune—it does not work. It can work in individual cases. I do not know whether one could say, if one may speak of a living man in this connection, that perhaps Bernard Baruch is an example where it worked.³⁹ I had heard this at one time, but I do not know the gentleman, and I do not know how it works in practice. But this is a very old man now, in addition, living in the American South. That I have heard; I do not know that. There may be other cases of this kind. But if it is a problem of a social kind, i.e., not a problem peculiar to him as an individual but to other people of his kind, he would have to think of the other people of his kind. And he would say that a solution which is even *perfect* for him, is imperfect because of these bonds; and the fundamental point seems to me to be this. Again speaking detachedly, hard-boiledly, and disregarding all of the deeper issues—why do you want perfect solutions?

Questioner: But that is the whole point. I am not looking for a solution. You see, I do not want Jews to cease to exist. (*Strauss:* Oh!) That is why a man who is a religious Jew, with a position before the mystery of being, this is a position for which I have respect; rather more, let me say in passing, than many others with which I am acquainted. But I meet people who do not have this orientation. I recognize that the race question is irrelevant; and yet withal, this individual creates a special orientation for himself which seems to me to have just the quality of a myth.

Strauss: No. That is, I believe, empirically wrong. I mean, if you mean by myth something fabricated, merely figured out, . . . [A break in the tape occurred.] . . . and that was the word *galut*, "exile." In other words, this is the recollection, the notion, that there is something—a deep defect—in our situation as Jews, and this deep defect in our situation as Jews is connected with the deep defect with the situation of man. That was an implication of the traditional Jewish faith. This implication—disregarding the theological premises, and so on, and its consequences—is, I think,

an empirically tenable assertion. And that the Jews know—most of them. I mean, it is perfectly clear, this difficult position in which modern Jews are; I have not brought it out fully because I thought everyone knows it. Every Jew surely knows it, and every thoughtful non-Jew who knows any Jews also does not have to be told. These are things which are partly very painful to bring out, if no useful purpose is served—in other words, merely for the sake of the record. That is, I would not do that. But, on the other hand, one cannot deny it, and deny, as you call it, its “reality.” It is not a myth. The theories of this or that Zionist ideology, these can be said to be myths. When I was still studying these things with intensity many decades ago, I always made a distinction between Pinsker as the clearest case on the one hand, and Nordau on the other.⁴⁰ Pinsker really started from the Jewish question as it was hitting him directly; and Nordau had a general theory of nationalism of which the Jewish case was only a special case. And I always went more for the more direct people, you know, who started from what everyone could know. And there are all kinds of other things as well, but I do not wish to go into intra-Jewish polemics. You are aware of the fact that there are Jews, a minority in this country, who regard the state of Israel as (to use a mild expression) a pain in the neck. I know these people, but one can simply say that they are the delusionists. One can also say it as follows, also on the lowest denominator: the Jewish problem, as it is called, is the most simple and available exemplification of the human problem. That is one way of stating that the Jews are the chosen people. If that is properly developed, the whole of the other things would come out. The clean solutions of which people dream and dreamt have led either to nothing, or to a much greater bestiality than the uneasy solutions with which sensible people will always be satisfied.

Questioner: Well, if I were to try to draw a general principle from what you have said—I do not know if this is right—but I would say something like this: a man is being dishonorable if he chooses to disagree with, or break away from, his origins, what his family believes.

Strauss: I qualified that. I said that I could visualize a man, stemming from absolute degradation and simply having a nobler thing in himself, tending away, as it were, in this way. And I could only say, he acts wisely. If he had the singular qualities ascribed to him, he would not go around and peddle them and say, “Look what I achieved.” But what I said is that this is not the case of the Jews. However degraded we had to live for centuries in all the various countries, we were not degraded. Surely we were maltreated; all kinds of things were inflicted upon us.

But for the *average* Jew it was perfectly clear that we did not deserve it at the hands of these people. Perhaps we deserved it at the hand of God—that is another matter—but not at the hands of the people as such. I could give you some childhood stories which are illustrative, and older people (or people of my age here) could also give examples, of what the traditional posture was. I remind you of only one essay which is still worthy of being read by everyone who is interested in this. That is an essay by Aḥad Ha'am. (You know who he was? Asher Ginsberg.) I mean an essay by Aḥad Ha'am which he called "In External Freedom and Internal Slavery,"⁴¹ and in which he compared the situation of the Jews in the Russian ghetto to the chief rabbi of France, who was also the head of the Sanhedrin—you know, an institution founded by Napoleon himself. This chief rabbi was highly respectable, with badges and all—you know, like this. And then Aḥad Ha'am showed him, on the basis of what this man said—this chief rabbi—that he was a slave, not a free man. Externally, he was free: he could vote, and do many other things, acquire property, whatever kind he liked. But in his heart he was a slave. Whereas the poorest Polish Jew (if he did not happen to be an individual with a particularly lousy character, which can happen in any community) was externally a man without rights and in this sense a slave, but he was not a slave in his heart. And that is of crucial importance in this matter.

Questioner: My point of view is this. Suppose a person who is an average Jew comes to me and says, "On the basis of my latest thinking, I had a real struggle, but I have decided that I can no longer in conscience remain a Jew. I have decided I will become a positivist, I will suspend judgment, etc." I would say that, even though I realize this is going to cause trouble with his family, and it is going to be dysfunctional for him (*Strauss:* Do you mean "inconvenient"?), yes, inconvenient for him, I would say that if this man remains a Jew he would be dishonorable.

Strauss: Oh! That is another question. You mean to say: is it not morally necessary for certain Jews not to go to synagogue, not to pray, and not to participate in other communal activities?

Questioner: I mean even more than that; I mean, take over, say, the trappings of another religion completely if he so decides that this is the correct thing to do.

Strauss: Yes, prior to any deeper argumentation, one would have to say yes. I was still brought up in the belief, in a very old-fashioned country,

that no Jew who ever converted to Christianity was sincere. That was what I learned and what I believed until I met, as a student, a professor who told me of his conversion to Christianity. (He was a son of a rabbi.) I must say I was not impressed by his story, and if I could speak of living people here among more or less strangers I could tell the story, which was more pitiable than an object of any indignation. But I would have to admit that he was subjectively sincere, and no calculation entered into it. I cannot say anything more about that. I know there is a real disproportion between my primitive feelings (which I learned from my wet nurse, as a much greater man put it) and my rational judgment. But I said at the beginning that conversion was always possible. And the question was not simply whether to be a member of a Jewish congregation, with all its implications. Quite a few Jews do not do that—you know what the statistics say about that. But, nevertheless, the interesting point is this: the Jewish question remains. I gave you the example of those people who became Christian Scientists. I assume—because everyone must be regarded as innocent until proven guilty—that they did it out of conviction. In other words, they did not want just to get rid of a “misfortune,” but they were convinced of the truth of Christian Science. All right, but what happened to them without any doings on their side? After all, the other Jews who were becoming Christian Scientists had also gotten this conviction—all pure convictions—yet the chairman of this group came to them and said, “Why don’t you form a group of Christian Scientists of your own?” You can say: “Well, for people who are *only* concerned with the religious truth—in this case, Christian Science—it does not make any difference whether they or their fellow workers are former Jews or not.” Surely. But that is, however, very unfair and, I would say, almost cruel, because these people suffered from that. While they did not become Christian Scientists in order to get rid of the Jewish disability, they felt a “discrimination” was committed. They are right from their point of view; only it is of no use to get indignant about individual occurrences or symptoms, but one must view the whole situation.

Questioner: In a sense, and I guess with some pain, I really think that I—as a Jew who is very concerned with finding some meaningful answer as to why I remain a Jew, and how to do so—must really repeat the question that was asked by the non-Jew. I think that you give us really little reason to want positively to remain Jewish. At best, you tell us that an empirical, hard-boiled analysis of the situation—which is your position tonight (*Strauss*: Absolutely and always.)—would constrain one in this direction. At second best, you tell us there are various flies in

the ointment which we might idealize. (*Strauss*: No! I did not say that. No, no.) Well, I guess really I'm reacting, and I think I'm permitted to react. (*Strauss*: Yes, sure, get it out of your system.) But basically, I think that what you are really suggesting—if you talk to the young people here, of whom I number myself (*Strauss*: Rightly.)—is that you are really challenging us, you are really forcing us to say that this is just another one of the things that “we shall overcome.” Because, even if we fail, it is worthwhile, from the way you paint the picture. And I think, and I would hope (although this is not my evening to lecture), that I have different reasons for positively wanting to remain a Jew, and for having an answer to in what ways one might be meaningfully different from a Christian. But partly my difference from you stems from my inability to accept your basic premise. I think at least that now—maybe we are deluded, but Americans in my situation, I think, pretty well feel that—it is a voluntary thing; that your anecdotes are out of date, so to speak; that the Christian Science story has no compelling meaning to people of our generation. And I think much of your interpretation of the American scene is based on such anecdotal material which I feel is not compelling, although it may be true that it has happened somewhere else and quite recently. But basically, accepting your premise, I would say that all you offer me positively is to be a religious Zionist. But failing that, you give me the quite comfortable solution—but which I find inadequate because not challenging enough, and not different enough—to be a scientist who somehow can reconcile his scientific positivism with the eternal mystique which, after all, derives from Judaism.

Strauss: Thank you very much for your statement. You misunderstood certain points; but since I know you, I can only say that that must be due to certain defects of my presentation. When you say that my knowledge of American Jewry (and there is a question there) is defective, I simply have to grant that. I came to this country only about twenty-three years ago. (I have not figured that out at the moment, but roughly.) But I do also have some training in seeing, by which I do not necessarily mean the social science training.

You see, what I tried to show is this: I think clarity or honesty about the most important matters is a most important thing. That was my premise. Therefore, I rejected—partly explicitly and partly implicitly, because I could not develop the whole thing—all attempts to interpret the Jewish past in terms of a culture. Therefore the emptiness of which you complain. In other words, for me the question is: truly either the Torah as understood by our tradition, or, say, unbelief. And I think that is infinitely more important than every cultural interpretation, which is

based on a tacit unbelief and cannot be a substitute for the belief it has given up. That is, I believe, the basis of our disagreement, as far as I can see it. Let me add one point. When I say “the Jewish faith as our ancestors held it,” I do not mean that every particular belief (even if entertained by the majority of Jews, or by the large majority of Jews, for centuries) must necessarily be binding. I happen to know a bit of the Jewish medieval thinkers, and I know that quite a few very powerful and important changes were made even by them. I believe—and I say this without any disrespect to any orthodox Jew—that it is hard for people, for most Jews today, to believe in verbal inspiration (I mean, in verbal inspiration of the Torah), and in the miracles—or most of the miracles—and other things. I know that. My friend Rabbi Harris is not here, but I am in deep sympathy with what he means by a “postcritical Judaism.” I think that it offers a perfectly legitimate and sensible goal, namely, to restate the essence of Jewish faith in a way which is by no means literally identical with, say, Rambam’s “Creator of the world,”⁴² or with something of this kind—I mean, with any traditional statement of principles. That is not the point. But a Judaism which is not belief in the “Creator of the world,” that has problems running through it.

Now I will tell you another story, and this story has a somewhat greater dignity. One of the most outstanding Jews in Germany was Hermann Cohen, the founder of the neo-Kantian school.⁴³ And he was concerned very much with how he could be both a philosopher and a Jew, in the sense of a believing Jew. That was a lifelong struggle, and what he said is by no means irrelevant, and is, I think, worthy of the study of everyone who is concerned with that. At a certain point in his life he read to an orthodox and educated Jew a brief statement of what he thought to be the essence of Judaism. And then the old-fashioned, simple man (of birth and education) said: “And where remains the Creator of the world?” I have heard that in this very building at some time someone said, “I believe in God as a symbol.”⁴⁴ Then I would say that a man who says, “I do not believe in God,” is, other things being equal, a better man. Now I do not deny that a man can believe in God without believing in creation, and particularly without believing in creation out of nothing. After all, the Bible itself does not explicitly teach creation out of nothing, as one might see. But still, Judaism contains the whole notion of man’s responsibility and of a final redemption. I mean, you can say: “All right, abolish the personal Messiah, and have only the messianic age”—which is done by most liberal Jews, as you know; and you could add many more of these things. But the very notion of the certainty of final redemption is untenable without belief in a God concerned with justice—and this is such a most important issue. And I would say that it seems to

me that the proper posture of a man who does not believe in that is to enter into this mystery, into this mysterious belief. And I think he will come out of it—even if he will not come out of it with belief in this—with some understanding he did not have before.

One of the deepest Jewish thinkers now, in my private opinion (which does not count much in these matters), perhaps the deepest Jewish thinker, is Gershom Scholem of the Hebrew University. Now in his most recent book, which is in German only (I suppose it came out in Hebrew, but I do not even remember the German title),⁴⁵ he shows to what amazing lengths some of our mystics went by thinking through these beliefs; and then they came out with views to which many of the objections, which many of us would have to such traditional beliefs, would no longer be tenable. That would be the kind of thing which I would regard as satisfactory. But, I believe, by simply replacing God by the creative genius of the Jewish people, one gives away, one deprives oneself—even if one does not believe—of a source of *human* understanding.⁴⁶ Let us also not forget to ask: what does it mean, that one does not believe? How much of the unbelief now existing is as much a matter of hearsay, or even of what someone of your profession would call “social pressure”? Belief and unbelief are not such simple states: here is a camp of the believers, and here is a camp of non-believers. Politically, it may very well appear this way on many occasions; but for most of the more *thoughtful* people in both camps, things would be different. Now I do not wish to minimize folk dances, Hebrew speaking, and many other things—I do not want to minimize them. But I believe that they cannot possibly take the place of what is most profound in our tradition.

But however this may be, I have had my day in court. I have said what I thought about it, and I must say that I am surprised that you are still here.

Notes

[“Why We Remain Jews” was a lecture delivered by Leo Strauss at the Hillel House, University of Chicago, on 4 February 1962. It seems as if Strauss was using notes which had been prepared previously, but these do not survive. A transcription was made by Werner Dannhauser and James Lane from a tape recording of the lecture. The lecture preserved in the tape, as the transcribers put it, consisted of “essentially oral material, much of which was developed spontaneously, and none of which was prepared with publication in mind.” The transcribers state that Strauss did not either review or formally approve the above lecture in its transcribed version. The transcription was dedicated to the

memory of Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky (1905–62), the director of the B’nai B’rith Hillel House at the University of Chicago who arranged the above lecture, among others, delivered by Strauss. This published version is based almost entirely on that transcription, with some slight grammatical changes made by the editor for the sake of clarity. Changes made by the editor which may be regarded as significant have been duly noted. The notes below to this lecture are entirely the work of the present editor. —Ed.]

1. The phrase which occurs in this sentence, “on that occasion about pogroms in Russia,” has been added by the editor in order to make clear which story it was that made such a deep impression on Strauss. ◀

2. Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), one of the great modern German poets and essayists, was a Jew who in 1825 resorted to baptism as what he called “the admission ticket to European civilization.” His attitude toward Judaism was deeply ambivalent. Strauss seems to refer to the famous lines from Heine’s poem, “The New Israelite Hospital in Hamburg” (1844), in which the poet speaks about Judaism not as a religion, but as “that dark misfortune” [das dunkle Weh], and as “that thousand-year-old family affliction” [das tausendjährige Familienübel]. See “Das neue Israelitische Hospital zu Hamburg,” in *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, gen. ed. Manfred Windfuhr. Vol. 2, *Neue Gedichte*, ed. Elisabeth Genton (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1983), 117–18. ◀

3. The phrase which occurs in this sentence, “especially after the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492,” has been added by the editor in order to make clear what “this time” was, to which Strauss refers, which was so “different.” It is constructed from a phrase used by Strauss himself toward the end of the previous paragraph. Strauss refers to what was, until the modern era, an unprecedented historical fact: the great numbers of forced and voluntary conversions of Jews to Christianity which occurred in the face of the anti-Jewish riots and massacres of 1391 in Spain, as well as in their wake. Of course, these great numbers were further hugely augmented by the voluntary and forced conversions of Jews to Christianity which occurred in the face of the 1492 order of expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Also, it should be noted that while Strauss referred above from memory to “the expulsion from France in 1340 (if I remember well), or the expulsion from England in 1290 or so,” his memory only served him well on England; regarding France, this event actually occurred in 1306. (To be sure, it was repeated again twice by France during the same century, in 1322 and 1394.) However, Strauss may have been thinking of the massacres of the Jews in France in 1348–49, which resulted from their being blamed for the Black Death. ◀

4. The phrase, “i.e., of escaping ‘discrimination’ by ceasing to be recognizable as Jews,” has been added by the editor in order to make clear what the “possibility” is to which Strauss had just referred. It is constructed from two phrases used by Strauss himself previously in this paragraph to define, or elaborate on, that possibility. ◀

5. See Strauss's further elaboration of these points in the "Preface to *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*," supra. ◀

6. For Ernst Röhm, I quote the passage from Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (New York: Bantam, 1976), p. 81: ◀

The only dissatisfaction, it seemed, came from the SA, which had by the end of 1933 become a behemoth of four million, but whose leader, Ernst Röhm, felt unrewarded in the national socialist state. Hitler began to regard the SA as a threat to his authority. Even though Röhm had been one of his old comrades from the Reichswehr days in Munich of 1919, Hitler did not hesitate to move against him. Over a period of months the SS and the army were readied, at Hitler's orders, to attack the SA. It was then that the SS emerged as the "elite" party military organization that would eventually dominate all Europe; it was then that the army smelled its great opportunity. On June 30, 1934, about two hundred SA men, including Röhm himself, were murdered with unspeakable brutality. The SA was finished as a major force in the German dictatorship and would henceforth exist under the shadow of the SS. ◀

7. "Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools." The phrase was first coined by, or attributed to, August Bebel (1840–1913), a German social democratic (or what the Russians would call "Menshevik") party leader. Subsequently, it was often repeated by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924), the leader of both the majority faction in the Russian Social Democratic Workers party (i.e., the "Bolsheviks"), and eventually also of communist or Soviet Russia as of their coup d'état in October, 1917. ◀

8. Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) was the premier of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964. Prior to his accession to full power, he was also the member of the communist party leadership who was perhaps most identified with the exposure of some of the monstrous crimes of Stalin. He served as First Secretary of the communist party, and at its 20th congress held in 1956 he delivered a "secret" report on "The Personality Cult [i.e., of Stalin] and Its Consequences." In this report he "informed" the Russian people about some of Stalin's most heinous crimes, and he denounced the worst excesses. Hence he seemed interested in correcting, or at least diminishing, the "methods" of absolute tyrannical rule that had been employed for most of thirty years by Stalin. ◀

9. For Franciscus Vieta (François Viète), see Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, translated by Eva Brann (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968), 150–85. Klein quotes Vieta from the end of his *Isagoge* (*Introduction to the Analytical Art*, translated by J. Winfree Smith in the Appendix to the same book, 315–53): "Analytical art appropriates to itself by right the proud *problem of problems*, which is: TO LEAVE NO PROBLEM UNSOLVED." (See Jacob Klein, *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, 185, 353.) ◀

10. Leon Pinsker (1821–91), *Autoemancipation—ein Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen, von einem russischen Juden* (*Autoemancipation—an appeal to his people by a Russian Jew*). Berlin: 1882. Pinsker was an assimilated Jew and a physician in czarist Russia who, in the aforementioned pamphlet, preceded Herzl by fourteen years in presenting a purely political analysis of the “Jewish problem” in nineteenth-century Europe, and also in suggesting a purely political solution. ◀

11. *Pirkei Avot* (*Sayings of the Fathers*) 1:14. The saying is attributed to Hillel the Elder (c. 60 B.C.E.–c. 10 C.E.), a religious sage and scholar in Judea approximately during the reign of Herod the Great. The complete saying may be translated as follows, with the order of the sentences as they are arranged in the original: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” ◀

12. Benedict (né Baruch) Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, chapter 3 (“On the Vocation of the Hebrews”), toward the end. It may be translated literally as follows: “. . . unless the foundations of their religion were to effeminate their spirits, I would absolutely believe, as human things are mutable, that someday, given the occasion, they will erect their imperium again and God will choose them anew.” [. . . nisi fundamenta suae religionis eorum animos effoeminarent, absolute crederem eos aliquando, data occasione—ut sunt res humanae mutabiles—suum imperium iterum erecturos, Deumque eos de novo electurum.] (My thanks to Martin D. Yaffe for allowing me to use his translation of the quoted passage, which is offered in note 65 (page 75) to his essay, “‘The Histories and Successes of the Hebrews’: The Demise of the Biblical Polity in Spinoza’s *Theologico-Political Treatise*,” vol. 7, nos. 1–2 [Spring 5755/1995]: 57–75 in *Jewish Political Studies Review*.) ◀

13. The Revisionist Zionist movement was formally established in 1925 by Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940). But the movement to which Strauss adhered from his youth (about 1916), and which he calls simply “political Zionism,” he identifies with Jabotinsky, who had eloquently espoused what would more or less be the Revisionists’ fundamental principles and policies for years prior to 1925 as the leader of a faction in the general Zionist movement. As Jabotinsky presented them, his ideas were merely rooted in the original political theory and practice of Theodor Herzl (1869–1904), the father of the modern Zionist movement. Herzl’s teaching, however, had undoubtedly been radicalized somewhat by Jabotinsky. Strauss was originally attracted to Jabotinsky for his honest Herzlianism. It was with this Herzlianism that Strauss identified himself affirmatively for the rest of his life. See “Letter to the Editor: The State of Israel,” *infra*. ◀

14. Again, see Strauss’s further elaboration of these points in the “Preface to *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*,” *supra*. ◀

15. Wilhelm Marr apparently coined the term in 1879. On the modern history of “anti-Semitism,” or hatred of Jews, see: Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to*

Destruction—Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987). ◀

16. *Rish'us* (in modern Hebrew, *rish'ut*) may be translated literally as viciousness, wickedness, or cruelty. It was used as a term for the hatred of Jews, or for “anti-Semitism,” predominantly by German Jews. The sentence structure as rendered by the transcribers has been altered slightly in order to make Strauss’s meaning clearer. Instead of “Why not call it as we Jews call it: *rish'us*, ‘viciousness’?” as offered by the transcribers, the two clauses have been rendered as two separate sentences, with the first sentence made Strauss’s definite question, and the second sentence made his definite answer; thus, it is offered in the text as: “Why not call it as we Jews call it? It is *rish'us*, ‘viciousness’.” ◀

17. The word “considerations” has been added to this sentence by the editor, since Strauss apparently did not finish the phrase in speaking, so that the adjective “broader” lacked any noun. (As is also possible, perhaps the tape recording or the transcribers missed the noun, which may have been spoken quietly by Strauss.) In any case, the word “considerations” was chosen because it is one often favored by Strauss in other, similar contexts. In the last clause of the previous sentence, the word “things” has been added, and the verb has been made plural (i.e., changed from “was” to “were”), in order to make the subject of this clause accord with its object. Thus, the unedited clause read: “that the highest of any nation was nothings and abominations.” ◀

18. Isaiah 6:5. ◀

19. David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) was the first prime minister of the modern state of Israel. He served as the leader of the government from 1948 to 1953, and again from 1955 to 1963. It seems likely Strauss was thinking of the state visit which Ben-Gurion made to Burma, and not to Thailand, in December, 1961. During this trip, Ben-Gurion spent eight days meditating, fasting, and reading in a Buddhist temple at the Rangoon residence of his friend U Nu, the prime minister of Burma. It should be noted that while Ben-Gurion did study Buddhist literature during his prolonged stay at the temple, at his request the daily Hebrew newspapers were also brought to him promptly each day. ◀

20. In this side remark made by Strauss, the phrase “Recall among the higher clergy” has been added by the editor, in light of what Strauss had just said in his own words, so that a complete and meaningful sentence might be formed with regard to Strauss’s allusion to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). He was a distinguished churchman and a passionate preacher for the need of the Second Crusade in 1146. But he unconditionally defended the Jews against physical attack, and attempted to prevent further brutality. He also denied any Christian legitimacy to such violence, and he maintained an absolute religious difference for Christians between Jews and Muslims. In an epistle on these matters, he stressed the demise by divine retribution of those knights in the First Crusade who had been persecutors of the Jews. ◀

21. Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut*, translated by Robert Warshow (New York: Schocken, 1947), 24–25. Xanten is a town in western Germany, on the northern reaches of the Rhine River. ◀

22. As far as I can detect from the English translations then available to Strauss, he translated by himself aphorism 205 from Nietzsche's *Dawn of Day* (*Morganröte*). In fact, there was only available to him a single version of any value: aphorism 205 as it was rendered in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1954), 88–89. However, Kaufmann offered only selections from *The Dawn*, and aphorism 205 only in an abridged form. Strauss (or the transcribers) quoted almost the entire passage; for the omissions, see *infra*, notes 23, 24, and 25. Strauss's own translation has also been compared with the translation made recently by R.J. Hollingdale, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 124–25. For the original German, see *Morganröte*, in *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Sect. 5, vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 180–83. ▶

23. The transcribers record Strauss as rendering the first half of the sentence in the following condensed form: "They themselves chosen for the highest things." What seems closer to a literal translation—"They themselves have never ceased to believe themselves called to the highest things"—has been substituted for the transcribed version, and derives from the Hollingdale translation, *Daybreak*, 124. But see also Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, 88, for a slightly different version, which is not closer to Strauss's: "They themselves have never ceased to believe in their calling to the highest things." The German original is as follows: "Sie haben selber nie aufgehört, sich zu den höchsten Dingen berufen zu glauben, . . ." See *Morganröte*, 181. ▶

24. A clause from the middle of this sentence had been omitted by Strauss, whether deliberately or not. (Or perhaps the omission must be attributed to the transcribers?) In any case, that clause has been added to the present version of the aphorism quoted from Nietzsche. Thus, what has been added is the following clause: "even in their passions they practice the caution taught by this experience. They are so sure in the . . ." I employ the translation made by Hollingdale, *Daybreak*, 125. (Kaufmann does not translate this phrase, or the one which precedes it, i.e., "they possess by far . . .," or the entire next section that follows it immediately, but resumes with "And how shall it issue forth," as it is rendered in Strauss's version.) See the German original, *Morganröte*, 182. ▶

25. A clause from the beginning of this sentence had been omitted by Strauss, whether deliberately or not. (Or perhaps the omission must be attributed to the transcribers?) In any case, that clause has been added to the present version of the aphorism quoted from Nietzsche. Thus, what has been added is the following clause: "And how shall it issue forth, this wealth of accumulated great impressions which Jewish history constitutes for every Jewish family, this wealth of passions, virtues, resolutions, renunciations, struggles, victories of every kind." I render it with the aid of the translations both by Kaufmann, *The*

Portable Nietzsche, 89, and by Hollingdale, *Daybreak*, 125. The German original is as follows: “Und wohin soll auch diese Fülle angesammelter grosser Eindrücke, welche die jüdische Geschichte für jede jüdische Familie ausmacht, diese Fülle von Leidenschaften, Tugenden, Entschlüssen, Entsagungen, Kämpfen, Siegen aller Art—wohin soll sie sich ausströmen, . . .” See the German original, *Morganröte*, 182–83. ◀

26. This sentence has been altered slightly by the editor in order to make the first sentence of the paragraph express Strauss’s meaning as a separate and intelligible thought, which in the spontaneity of speech was slightly jumbled with the thought of the second sentence. (For one thing, among others, the phrase that Strauss used to begin the next complete sentence—which does form a complete thought—was also uttered but not completed by him in the beginning of the present sentence as well.) Thus, the transcribers recorded Strauss’s speech as follows: “The most patent defect, however, of Nietzsche’s analysis (and it has some defects) is that his statement, which is almost dithyrambic, is based on a very deep analysis, perhaps on the deepest analysis ever made, of what assimilation could possibly mean. Now the most patent defect of Nietzsche’s analysis seems to be this. . . .” As the first sentence stood, it suggested that the defect of Nietzsche’s statement was to be based on a very deep analysis, if not the deepest analysis ever made, of what assimilation could possibly mean. I doubt whether this sentence, as originally spoken, was meant by Strauss to criticize Nietzsche for the depth of his analysis. A brief note on the historical facts to which Strauss alludes in the last half of the previous paragraph of the lecture (p. 326 *supra*) may be helpful to some readers. Albert Einstein (1879–1955), one of the great twentieth-century physicists, is best known for discovering the principle of the relativity of motion; he also received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921 for his conception of the “photoelectric effect.” Max Planck (1858–1947), another great twentieth-century physicist, first suggested in 1900 the hypothesis of “quanta” of energy and subsequently explored the idea speculatively, which earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918, and which initiated the beginnings of the “quantum” revolution in modern physics. In 1914 Planck helped to secure for his friend Einstein a professorship at the Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin. Einstein remained with Planck at the Prussian Academy for the next nineteen years; while there he made several further discoveries of high importance to modern physics. It is, then, to this research academy that Strauss alludes. (He calls it a “seminar,” perhaps referring to its “physics seminar”?) The accession of Hitler to power in Germany in January of 1933 caused Einstein to resign almost immediately from the Prussian Academy as well as to renounce his German citizenship, and to accept an offer to pursue his research at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey. ◀

27. The transcribers were apparently unable to hear the words that Strauss spoke in the middle of the final clause of this sentence. As a result, the final clause is transcribed as ending with: “which was . . . Jews.” The editor has

taken the liberty of giving the phrase “accepting of the national character of the” to the final clause, in light of the contrast between the older and the younger generations of German Jews which Strauss had been discussing in the previous clauses and sentences. The attempt has been made to use, as much as possible, words or their opposites which Strauss himself used to convey his meaning, and especially to do so by a reversal of Strauss’s phrase “refusing any national character of,” employed by him in the previous clause. ◀

28. According to Joseph H. Hertz, ed., *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1948), 551, this bracketed passage is a conflation of two biblical verses: Isaiah 30:7 and 45:20. It is also the sentence that was falsely accused of slurring Christianity, and was even used as a pretext for persecution of the Jews. (Even Manasse ben Israel believed himself called on to dedicate an entire chapter in his *Vindiciae Judaeorum* [1656] to a defense of the disputed line.) By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through fear of church and state censors, it had been removed from most Ashkenazic prayerbooks. The disputed line is retained by Sephardic prayerbooks; and it has been restored in at least one recent American edition of the orthodox prayerbook of which I am aware—*The Complete Artscroll Siddur*, ed. Nosson Scherman (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1984), 158. The prayer first appeared in the arrangement by Rav (Abba bar Aivu, or Abba “Arikha”) of the New Year’s Day liturgy, produced during the third century C.E. in the Babylonia of the Zoroastrians, i.e., a thoroughly non-Christian context. By the twelfth century C.E., it had been adopted as the prayer used to conclude all three daily prayer services during the entire year, and for all holydays as well. Tradition ascribed its composition to Joshua, following the crossing of the Jordan River by Israel in its conquest of Canaan. Two modern opinions about its origin are still upheld: Rav may have been the prayer’s author, or it may have been of even greater antiquity, possibly passed down from the Persian period of Jewish history, following the return from the Babylonian exile and prior to Alexander’s conquest of Judea. It is certainly a prayer of high and noble spirituality, stressing God’s pure and absolute sovereignty, but its popular “authority” derives not only from this nor even from its antiquity. Rather, it seems to issue from its relation to medieval Christian persecution of the Jews, and especially from those events which occurred during and since the Crusades: “It was the death-song of Jewish martyrs in the Middle Ages.” (See Philip Birnbaum, ed., *Daily Prayer Book/Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem* [New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1949], 136.) Since Strauss emphasizes so strikingly in this lecture the religious nobility of Jewish martyrdom during the Crusades, it was deemed appropriate that the full text of the prayer which those martyrs recited be conveyed. It also seemed fitting to record the full prayer, with the few additional words of the controversial sentence, because for Strauss the prayer as he refers to it may possibly encompass this much-disputed line in it, which I would suggest for two reasons. First, he alludes enigmatically to the prayer as “a stumbling block to many.” (To be sure, he may just mean its crystalization of a high Jewish theology, in which some of his hearers may not believe.) Second, during his dis-

cussion of the anti-Judaism of classical antiquity, he makes a statement which, if not a literal quote of the controversial line in the prayer, is certainly a virtual paraphrase: “And now, our ancestors asserted *a priori*—that is to say, without looking at any of these gods—that these gods were nothings and abominations, that the highest things of any nation were nothings and abominations.” Strauss speaks of the *Aleinu* in glowing terms, as “the greatest expression of this, surpassing everything that any present-day man could write.” In the context of the lecture, Strauss spoke so eloquently about the *Aleinu* prayer presumably because of the invocation of God against idolatry and against its attendant evils, and because of the call for everlasting fidelity to the special Jewish historical task in helping to bring closer the future redemption of humanity from idolatry in its multifarious forms. ◀

29. Deuteronomy 4:39. ◀

30. Exodus 15:18. ◀

31. Zechariah 14:9. ◀

32. The phrase which occurs in this sentence, “of their political relations,” has been added by the editor to the end of the sentence in order to make Strauss’s meaning clearer, i.e., to make clear what fate it is that was of concern to Strauss. For my choice of these words, I make use of a construction which combines his earlier “cultural relations” used in the same sentence with his later “political matters” used in the next sentence, and since the sentence clearly seems to intend to express a contrast between cultural and political relations. ◀

33. The last letter Lessing wrote to Mendelssohn, of 19 December 1780:

This emigrant’s proper name is Alexander Daveson, and I can testify that our people, incited by yours, behaved abominably toward him. All he wants of you, dear Moses, is that you show him the shortest and surest way to a European country where there are neither Christians nor Jews. I hate losing him; but as soon as he safely arrives there, I shall be the first to follow him.

Translated by Alexander Altmann, in his *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 581. ◀

34. Martin Buber (1878–1965) was a major twentieth-century philosopher and Jewish thinker, who taught in Germany and Israel, and who was the author of such works as: *I and Thou* (1923); *Moses* (1946); and *Eclipse of God* (1953). Paul Tillich (1886–1965) was the religious thinker who exercised perhaps the greatest influence on Protestant theology since 1945. He taught in Germany and the United States, and among his major works are: *The Courage to Be* (1952); *Dynamics of Faith* (1957); *Systematic Theology* (1963). See also note 44, *infra*. ◀

35. James Parkes (1896–1981) was an Anglican priest in Great Britain, a scholar of Judaism and especially of its historical and theological relations with Christianity, and an advocate of a fundamental correction in Christian attitudes to Jews, Judaism, and Israel. Among his major works are: *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (1934); *End of an Exile: Israel, the Jews, and the Gentile World* (1954); and *Whose Land? A History of the Peoples of Palestine* (1970). ◀

36. Louis Finkelstein (1895–1991) was a scholar of rabbinic and medieval Judaism, and a leader of the Conservative religious movement in Judaism in the United States. He was president as well as chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York from 1940 to 1971. Among his major scholarly works are: *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (1924); *Akiba: Scholar, Saint, and Martyr* (1936); *The Pharisees* (1962); and *New Light from the Prophets* (1970). Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) was one of the leading Protestant theologians of the twentieth century in North America, who taught at the Union Theological Seminary in New York for several decades. He focused on the relation of religion to politics, and he was through his long career a stalwart friend of Jews, Judaism, and Israel in Christian circles as well as in the civic domain. Among his main works are: *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932); *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1943); *Faith and History* (1949); *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (1953). ◀

37. The words “of this reconciliation,” as well as the word “reconciliation” at the beginning of the previous sentence, have been added by the editor in order to make the subject of Strauss’s discussion clearer. It was chosen because Strauss himself uses the word “reconciliation” in a similar context, and for a directly related point, further along in the paragraph. (See: “But we must not forget the background of this reconciliation.”) ◀

38. The words, “were friendly toward Jews, is significant,” have been added by the editor in order to make the object of Strauss’s sentence clearer, which Strauss himself neglected to provide in the spontaneity of the speech. It is based on similar language used by Strauss further along in the paragraph. (See: “who were not only friendly to Jews,” as used with reference to Weber and Schelling.) In the last half of Strauss’s response to a questioner (pp. 335–36 supra), he refers in passing to Weber and Schelling as two German thinkers who “showed a very profound understanding of what one would call the ‘substance’ of Judaism.” Perhaps it might be helpful to some readers if their ideas on the substance of Judaism were presented briefly, since Strauss regarded these two thinkers as significant enough to mention only them by name. F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854) defended a position, in the final stage of his philosophic development, which maintained the irreducible divine revelation to Israel. It has been responsible for conveying the Hebrew Bible, for bringing to light the profundity of the inexpressible divine name, and for bearing divine chosenness as the ground for God’s special relation to man. Also, through his *The Ages of the World* (1811), Schelling exercised a deep influence on Franz Rosenzweig’s Jewish thought. Max Weber (1864–1920), in his *Ancient Judaism* (1917–19) and in his *The Sociology of Religion* (1921–22), studied carefully the question of the social

sources and subsequent historical unfolding of Judaism as the original ethical rationalism. In his view, through the notion of God in Judaism and through how it was elaborated socially and morally, the Jews contributed decisively to the enduring character and virtue, as well as to the unique and continuing problematics, of Western civilization. ◀

39. Bernard M. Baruch (1870–1965) was an eighth generation American Jew, whose family was long settled in South Carolina. He was a financier as well as an eminent statesman, who served his country with distinction from 1912 to 1951 in the administrations of several presidents. ◀

40. For Leon Pinsker, see note 10 supra. Max Nordau (1849–1923) was a celebrated European Jewish essayist, critic, and journalist. He was one of the first converts made by Theodor Herzl himself to the cause of Zionism. As a spellbinding speaker, he delivered the keynote programmatic address to the delegates of the first World Zionist Congress in 1897 at Basel, Switzerland. Strauss wrote a youthful article on the theme of “Nordau’s Zionism” (1923), which was published in *Der Jude* 7 (1923): 657–60, edited by Martin Buber. ◀

41. Ahad Ha’am, pen name of Asher Ginsberg (1856–1927), was an important modern Jewish thinker, a lucid Hebrew writer and stylist, and the father of “cultural Zionism,” the opposite pole to the political Zionism of Theodor Herzl. The well-known essay to which Strauss refers, “*Avdut betokh Herut*” (“Slavery in Freedom”), was first published in 1891. See *Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha’am* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964), 64–69; *Selected Essays of Ahad Ha’am*, translated and edited by Leon Simon (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), 171–94. ◀

42. Rambam—the acronym of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (1135–1204), also known as Moses Maimonides—is the familiar name used by traditional Jews. Rambam in his *The Guide of the Perplexed*, to whose careful study Strauss devoted enormous attention, makes the belief in God as the Creator absolutely crucial to Jewish theology; and he elaborates a theologically sophisticated notion of what such belief in God’s creation of the world means, especially in contrast to the doctrine of the eternity of the world enunciated by ancient and medieval Aristotelian philosophy and science. For creation, see *Guide* 2.13–31. ◀

43. Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) was a leader of the neo-Kantian school of philosophy in the nineteenth century, and he was associated for several decades with the University of Marburg in Germany. He developed his own system of philosophy in the neo-Kantian mode, and he composed a major three-volume work to articulate it. In his final years, he returned to Judaism and wrote what is regarded as one of the truly great works of modern Jewish philosophy, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*. For the complex views of Strauss on Cohen, see essay five supra in the present volume; and see also the Editor’s Introduction. ◀

44. See *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 33, 38–39; *Philosophy and Law*, translated by Eve Adler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 44–45, 48–51, 139 note 6; K. H. Green, *Jew and Philosopher* (Albany: State

University of New York Press, 1993), 46–47. Franz Rosenzweig, at the end of his commentary on Yehuda Halevi's poem "The Name," tells the story about Hermann Cohen and the *Borei 'olam* which was first communicated to Rosenzweig by Strauss, and which was supposed by Rosenzweig to convey the fatal flaw in the heart of the rationalist theology of Cohen. For a "rebuttal," see Steven S. Schwarzschild, "Franz Rosenzweig's Anecdotes about Hermann Cohen," in *Gegenwart im Rückblick*, edited by H. A. Strauss and K. R. Grossman (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1970), 209–18. For a translation of the original commentary by Rosenzweig on the Halevi poem, see *Franz Rosenzweig and Yehuda Halevi*, by Barbara E. Galli (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 206–7. The belief in "God as a symbol" may refer to the theology of Paul Tillich, who taught at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, as well as at Harvard University, and who lectured on numerous occasions at the University of Chicago, and then taught there from 1962 to 1965. See his *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 41–54, 89–98. A remark similar to what occurs in the text was made by Strauss in "An Epilogue," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, edited by Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 148–49. In this remark Strauss makes it clear that, in his opinion, "a frank atheist is a better man than an alleged theist who conceives of God as a symbol." See also note 34, *supra*. ◀

45. Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) was the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, and of most aspects in the spiritual history of Judaism. Scholem, who was a friend of Strauss from their youth in Germany, and who taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem since his emigration to Palestine in 1923, was also an important modern Jewish thinker in his own right. In his remarks on the radical thinking of the Jewish mystics, Strauss probably refers to Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960); *idem, On the Kabbala and Its Symbolism*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken, 1965). ◀

46. In this context, it is perhaps worth considering the remarks that Scholem, to whom Strauss just paid such high tribute, made in his essay "Reflections on Jewish Theology" (1974) on substituting for the belief in God, the belief in "the creative genius of the Jewish people." In these remarks, Scholem also links the doctrine of revelation taught by Jewish religious existentialism, which to him actually implies a humanism, to the humanist positivism of secular cultural Zionism. The remarks are fully quoted in the Editor's Introduction, *supra*, note 99. See also *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, edited by Werner Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), 274–75. ◀